

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 OMB-01 ACDA-12 MCE-00 AID-05
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USSOUTHCOM QUARRY HEIGHTS CANAL ZONE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MANAGUA 3362

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MPOL, NU
SUBJECT: SECURITY ASSISTANCE ASSESSMENT: NICARAGUA

REF: STATE 167901

SUMMARY: THE FOLLOWING DATA PROVIDES RESPONSES TO THE REFTEL
REQUEST FOR INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE.
END SUMMARY.

1. US INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES: US POLICY IN NICARAGUA IS
TO PROMOTE IMPROVED RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC
CHANGE IN A COUNTRY WHICH HAS A TRADITION OF PERSONALISTIC,
AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT.DURING THE PAST YEAR THERE HAVE
BEEN STEPS IN THIS DIRECTION AND, AT THE SAME TIME, THERE
HAVE BEEN HEIGHTENED POLITICAL POLARIZATION, REVOLUTIONARY
ACTIVISM, AND MILITANCE ON THE PART OF OPPOSITIONISTS WHICH
AT TIMES HAVE RESULTED IN PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION AND SOME ACTS OF
GON HEAVYHANDEDNESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES. THE US IS ALSO
INTERESTED IN PROMOTING
THE DELIVERY OF DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO THE
POOREST SEGMENTS OF NICARAGUA'S POPULATION WITH
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MINIMAL DIVERSION OF SCARCE RESOURCES TO OTHER USES
SUCH AS EXCESSIVE MILITARY EXPENDITURES. A FURTHER US
INTEREST IS PROMOTING A PEACEFUL REGIONAL CLIMATE
WHICH FAVORS ECONOMIC AND DEMOCRATIC PROGRESS AS WELL
AS CONTINUANCE OF NICARAGUAN SUPPORT FOR US HEMISPHERE
POLICY. IN FURTHERANCE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION, THE US
PARTICIPATES IN REGIONAL JOINT MILITARY ACTIVITIES.

TO ADVANCE US OBJECTIVES REGARDING INTERNAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THE US CONFRONTS A DILEMMA. WE DO NOT WANT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH BOLSTERING THE GON (OR THE GN)(GUARDIA NACIONAL) WHICH ARE SEEN BY OPPOSITIONISTS AS INSTRUMENTS OF REPRESSION OF POLITICAL DISSENT. AT THE SAME TIME, US INTERESTS WOULD NOT BE SERVED BY THE GON (OR THE GN) BECOMING SO WEAKENED THAT IT WOULD TIE ITS SURVIVAL TO INCREASED REPRESSION, E.G., REIMPOSITION OF MARTIAL LAW, OR BY PUBLIC ORDER YIELDING TO ANARCHY, OR BY UNDEMOCRATIC FORCES GAINING CONTROL. US POLICY INCLUDING SECURITY ASSISTANCE MUST, THEREFORE, BE FINELY TUNED TO PERMIT BOTH PUSHING THE GON AWAY FROM REPRESSION AND PULLING IT TOWARDS DEMOCRATIC CHANGE. THIS CANNOT BE DONE WITHOUT SOME LEVERAGE IN THE FORM OF A CONTINUING, ALTHOUGH MINIMAL TRADITIONAL ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP. THE US MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM HAS ALREADY BEEN REDUCED SO SIGNIFICANTLY IN TERMS OF US MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THE IMET TRAINING PROGRAM THAT IT HAS PROVIDED A CLIMATE IN WHICH THE GON HAS TURNED TO CONTRACT U.S. CIVILIANS TO PROVIDE TRAINING. THIS IN TURN HAD CAUSED THE US AS MUCH OF AN IMAGE PROBLEM AS THE PREVIOUS, LARGER US MILITARY PRESENCE. OPPOSITIONISTS FEEL THAT THE USG SHOULD IMPEDE THESE "MERCENARY" ACTIVITIES.

2. THREAT PERCEPTION (GON): THE GON'S MOST SERIOUS
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PERCEIVED EXTERNAL THREAT IS A CLANDESTINE OR OVERT INVASION BY CUBA. THIS PERCEPTION IS BASED ON KNOWLEDGE THAT CUBA CURRENTLY OFFERS FSLN GUERRILLA PROPAGANDA, TRAINING AND ORIENTATION SUPPORT. THE CUBAN-NICARAGUAN ANTAGONISM IS ALSO ACCENTUATED BY THE FACT THE GON OFFERED LAUNCHING PAD SUPPORT TO THE BAY OF PIGS INVASION. CUBAN PARTICIPATION IN AFRICA HAS HEIGHTENED NICARAGUAN FEARS. DISORDERS IN EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, AND RUSSIAN AND CUBAN DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE AND LABOR DIFFICULTIES IN COSTA RICA ARE VIEWED AS CONFIRMATION OF A COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE IN CENTRAL AMERICA. THERE IS ALSO A NERVOUSNESS REGARDING THE SUPERIOR MILITARY CAPABILITY OF ITS NORTHERN NEIGHBOR, HONDURAS, ALTHOUGH THIS, AT PRESENT, IS PROBABLY CONSIDERED LOW LEVEL. INTERNALLY, THE PERCEIVED THREAT IS FROM THE FSLN GUERRILLAS WHICH HAVE THE DEMONSTRATED CAPABILITY FOR CROSS-BORDER OPERATIONS FROM COSTA AND TO A LESSER EXTENT HONDURAS AGAINST MILITARY COMMANDS AS WELL AS THE ABILITY WITHIN THE COUNTRY TO INITIATE AMBUSHES OF GN PATROLS, OTHER VIOLENT ACTIONS DIRECTED AGAINST THE GON (AND GN) AND THE CAPABILITY TO PROVOKE SERIOUS CIVIL DISTURBANCES. THE LOCATION OF CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GON AND FSLN HAS

MOVED FROM COUNTRYSIDE TO MAJOR POPULATED AREAS.

3. THREAT PERCEPTION (MISSION): MISSION DOES NOT BELIEVE AN OVERT OR COVERT DIRECT CUBAN PARTICIPATION IN REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES IN NICARAGUAN TERRITORIAL LIMITS IS LIKELY AT PRESENT. HOWEVER, GIVEN CUBAN MILITARY ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA, SUCH AN EVENTUALITY CANNOT BE COMPLETELY DISCOUNTED. THERE IS A MORE LIKELY POSSIBILITY OF CUBA FACILITATING INCREASED INDIRECT SUPPORT (E.G., WEAPONS, TRAINING, OR FINANCING) TO THE FSLN. THE MISSION BELIEVES THE GON'S PERCEPTION OF THE INTERNAL REVOLUTIONARY THREAT IS REASONABLE.

4. MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. THE GON HAS A UNITARY MILITARY
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UNIFORMED SERVICE BASED ON STRUCTURE OF USMC ORGANIZATION IN NICARAGUA IN 1930'S AND DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE INTERESTED IN A HASTY CHANGE OF THAT STRUCTURE. HOWEVER, WITHIN

THE GN, CERTAIN KEY MEMBERS HAVE RECOMMENDED SEPARATION OF POLICE AND ARMY FUNCTIONS. (NOTE: THIS IS A REFORM DEMANDED BY THE OPPOSITION. AND THIS COULD BE ACCEPTED BY PRESIDENT SOMOZA AS PART OF POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS. END NOTE). THE GN HAS FOCUSED ON THE NEED FOR INTERNAL RESTRUCTURING TOWARDS A REGIONAL COMMAND ORGANIZATION WHICH WOULD SEPARATE THE CURRENT COMBINATION OF POLICE AND MILITARY FUNCTIONS AT THE DEPARTMENTAL HEADQUARTERS. IT IS NOT KNOWN WHEN OR WHETHER THIS PROPOSAL MIGHT BE IMPLEMENTED.

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